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"THE SIGN OF THE SON OF MAN."

A WORD WITH HIS PEOPLE,

BY THE

REV. EDMUND WOOD, M.A.

ABOUT

THE CROSS

CARRIED BEFORE THE CHOIR IN

St. John the Evangelist's Church, Montreal.

PRINTED, (NOT PUBLISHED) FOR THE LAY ASSOCIATION OF ST. JOHN'S CHURCH,
MONTREAL.

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"GAZETTE" PRINTING HOUSE, NEXT THE POST OFFICE.

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NOTE.—The writer is indebted to Mr. Beresford Hope's Book—"Worship in the Church of England;" to a sermon by Dr. Oldknow; to the Rev. I. William's commentary; for three passages which are incorporated into this address.

He regrets the necessity he was under of expressing his variance with his Bishop. No other course seemed open to him, but that of speaking out—and speaking out does not imply disrespect.

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ST. MATT. XXIV. 30.—“ *The Sign of the Son of Man.*”

Instead, my friends, of preaching the formal written sermon, which is customary on Sunday mornings, I desire to say a few words to you, by way of explanation, and, (if necessary) of defence, about the Cross which has recently caused discussion among many, and—I am bound to own it—ill-feeling among a few.

If I speak at some length, try and bear with me. Indeed, it seems almost necessary to offer an apology for taking up your time with so unimportant a subject.

Let me begin by going to the root of the matter; and let me tell you how the introduction of the Cross was brought about, and then, if there be any blame attaching anywhere, you yourselves can decide who is worthy to receive it.

Last year, a friend of mine (whose kind interest in our Church from its foundation has never flagged), said to me just before going home, “What shall I bring for the Church this time, when I come from England?” “What we have long wanted,” I replied at once: “to improve our plain service, a simple handsome Cross to carry before the choir.”

“Will you use it, if I do?” said my friend. “Surely we will,” I replied.

That was all that passed. In a month or two the Cross arrived; it was formally presented on Easter eve, accepted,

and (as you know) on Easter day, it was carried for the first time.

So you see, I, the Rector of the Parish, and I alone, am the responsible person, from first to last, in this matter. There has been no wire-pulling; no underhand influence at work (as some have hinted) connected with it, from beginning to end.

I sincerely wish, my friends, that anything I could say might disarm the prejudices of those who, so strangely dislike the symbol of our Redemption. I fear, however, it would be useless to attempt it, and to such I am not now, chiefly, addressing myself. I speak mainly to those who may have been at all disquieted by the foolish and reckless statements which have been used (as I firmly believe) for no other purpose than, wantonly, to stir up strife. Certainly, I never anticipated such a disturbance as has been made,—not, I mean, by you,—about so harmless, nay, so edifying a symbol. For it seems to me that the Cross, borne on high, should naturally head all our processions; to the font, or the altar, the wedding or the funeral. We have lived down the prejudice that crosses in our cemeteries, or on our churches, are distinctive of any party—much less of Romanism—why should we not use them in all our church processions?

If you, my friends, have not got over your pious horror of a cross carried with the choir, why how can you sit comfortably in a church, where there is one of metal on the altar; and another of wood, on the chancel screen?

And if the cross offends you, what would you put into its place? I can think of nothing. A staff with a silver knob (such as I have seen) is meaningless. We used to have a brass verge (surmounted by a fleur-de-lys) carried by a verger, which we discontinued on account of its want of meaning. The Bishop has a silver mitre carried before him in the Cathedral; that would be manifestly unsuitable for a parish Church.

You know, I presume, what the Cross means? In Holy Baptism, when the child is signed with the sign of the Cross, you know why it is done? It is done in token that hereafter the child, so signed, shall not be ashamed to confess the faith of Christ crucified, and manfully to fight under His Banner, against sin, the world, and the Devil, and to continue Christ's faithful soldier and servant unto his life's end.

What more fitting symbol could there be, then, when the ministers of Christ crucified, go to celebrate the memorial of His Death, than the sign of His Sacred Passion, carried before them? Orange and Masonic Regalia are freely allowed to be worn and carried in our churches—on what reasonable ground, then, can the Cross be objected to?

But now let me descend from general objections, to those which are particular; and still let me speak to you in the simplest, most homely, style; for I am anxious above all things (if, indeed, it is possible) not to be misjudged, or misunderstood.

I. First, *it is objected to the Cross that it is "Popish,"* because it is to be seen in Roman Catholic Churches. My Friends, is everything bad which is used in the Latin Church? If so, how about our Liturgy, Creed, Lord's Prayer? Why! there must, of necessity, be in our churches, a great many things which are (as people say, though I dislike to use the term) "Popish," and "look Popish." See the Lord's Table yonder. Why, it looks like an Altar. It has Cross and lights. Exactly so. We wish it so to look; and intend it so to look; because, as well as the "*Holy Table*"—it is the "*Altar*." St. Paul, you know, says "*we have an altar*." Whatever is good, whatever is beautiful, whatever has a holy meaning, that, whether it be Popish or Methodistical, that, so long as it is not contrary to the law of the church, that, so long as it helps to good thoughts and holy aspirations, that, I

claim, the right to use ; that, if it seem wise and fitting, I intend to use.

The objection that the Cross is "Popish" proves too much.

The English Cathedral and St. George's Church are built in the form of a Cross: Is any one mad enough to say that the transepts should be demolished in order to destroy the cruciform ground plan? Yet people, to be consistent, ought to go that length.

It is said in the Gospel, that, just before our Lord's coming to judge the world, "the Sign of the Son of Man shall appear in heaven." "The Sign" shall go before and precede His awful approach. Do you know that some good and learned men have had no hesitation in taking this passage in its literal sense? They believe that there will be some awful and glorious appearance of our Lord's Cross. The Sign they think "will be visible and unmistakeable in unquestioned manifestation; Yea, as visible and extensive as the sky over our head. Oh! Cross of Christ! the Saviour of life and of death! Some shall mourn at beholding thee with a Godly sorrow, some in confusion of face!"

"Have you heard the dreadful, idolatrous things they have been doing at St. John's?" said a lady, to an eminent citizen whom she met on Easter Monday. "No, my dear madam," he replied, "to what do you refer?" "Why, have you not heard? They absolutely carried a Cross in St. John's Church when the choir entered for service: and they carried it out, Sir. Is it not dreadful? What *are* we coming to?"

"Oh, my dear Madam," briskly replied the gentleman, "That's nothing at all—nothing at all. Why! I went to a church—not St. John's—on the Sunday before, and "(would you believe it?) They actually sang an hymn *to the Cross*, yes, sang *to the Cross*."

[Hymn 97. "Faithful Cross above all other, one and only noble tree :
 "None in foliage, none in blossom, none in fruit thy peer may be :
 "Sweetest Wood and sweetest Iron! Sweetest weight is hung on
 Thee."]

Dear friends, one would think that the differences between our church of England, and the church of Rome are broad enough to prevent any possibility of the one being confounded with the other. Let me point out a few of those differences for your consideration :—

Members of the Roman church invoke the saints : we do not.

They believe in the Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin as a Dogma of the faith : we do not.

They believe in the efficacy of Indulgences : we do not.

They believe in Transubstantiation : we do not.

They believe in the Supremacy and Infallibility of the Pope : we most strongly deny both.

With them, private confession before communion is obligatory : with us it is optional, and entirely free.

Their service is in Latin : ours is in English.

The very appearance of their churches is sufficiently different from ours, to prevent their being mistaken as belonging to the same body. Go into a Roman church : what do you see ? You see many altars, at all of which service might be going on at the same time, by as many priests. You would see images, perhaps as large as life, (decked in silk, lace, and tinsel) of the Blessed Virgin, and other saints. You would see (in Europe) votive offerings ; some puerile, and some offensive to good taste. Whilst, as you perfectly well know, in *our* churches, there is only (usually) one altar, and nothing whatever to correspond with the other things I have mentioned. Surely, Brethren, these differences are enough to put to rest the most nervous apprehensions as to resemblance to Rome.

II. *It is objected to the Cross that it is illegal.* What

do you mean by things being illegal? You include under that term things (1) forbidden by the Rubrics: (2) things not expressly ordered. Of course things forbidden, in so many words, are illegal. But the use of all things not expressly ordered, is not illegal. Even the Bishop does not raise that objection. Many things not ordered, are allowed: *e. g.* surplices worn by the choir, Pastoral Staves and Croziers carried before many Bishops: Altar nosegays, organs, seats for the congregation to sit on: all these are not ordered, are they therefore illegal? Are you prepared to stand through a long sermon, because your benches are illegal? I myself had the great honour some years ago, to carry the Pastoral staff before Bishop Fulford, on the occasion of the consecration of the Bishop of Quebec. No, the cross is no more illegal, than the Pastoral staff, or the mitre carried before Bishops, or the mace carried in old fashioned churches by the beadle, or the simple wands of office, which sides-men, and wardens sometimes bear, in parochial processions. Even the crucifix, would seem not to be illegal: for I see, by the "Guardian" newspaper, that a crucifix, borne by an acolyte, vested in a cotta and purple cassock, was carried before the assistant Bishop of London, at the laying of the foundation stone of the church of St. Agatha. Nor is it exclusively confined to the Latin Church. In protestant Germany, when the Prince Imperial (grand-son of our Queen) was confirmed in the Royal church of Potsdam, it was done before an altar, garnished with crucifix and lighted candles.

Some years ago, this use of the Evangelical Church of Prussia, was rather amusingly brought under the ken of members of that party in the Church of England who, also, call themselves Evangelical, but with not quite an identical use of language. The king, near the close of his active reign, gave a hospitable reception to that cosmopolitan body called the "Evangelical Alliance," and he

assigned a church in Berlin for the meeting of the committee. Imagine the horror and disgust of the members of the Alliance (Protestants of Protestants) in having to deliberate in the presence of an altar furnished with crucifix and tapers. Fancy, my friends, the Very Rev. the Dean of Montreal, (a member of the Alliance), in such a predicament !

These remarks are not meant to pave the way for the introduction of the crucifix. I have no such wish or intention ; albeit, I am of opinion that no sermon of man's composition, can preach so eloquently as does the mute figure of the dying Redeemer to eye and heart. Nor do I think that the most timid need fear the inroads of Popery from the adoption of a rite which is the legal, obligatory custom of that Church, of which the most exalted member is the Emperor William, and the most powerful, Prince Bismarck !

III.—*The Bishop* (you object) *says it is "contrary to the spirit and ritual of our church."* He does say so ; but let us look at facts ; at things as they are, in the Church of England, at home and abroad.

The following is the account of the service at the last meeting of the Provincial Synod of South Africa :—The cathedral is a large and plain classic building, seated for about a thousand ; the ritual East-end is nicely arranged. the altar being well elevated and having the proper ornaments, cross, candles, and vases of flowers on the shelf attached to the reredos. To-day it is vested in a handsome red frontal (red being the color for the Holy Spirit) and lace super-frontal. The special service of the opening of the Synod was a semi-choral Celebration, which commenced at 10.45 by the entry of the procession from the (ritual) west door, in the following order, singing "The Church's one foundation."

Rev. G. Pinker, Curate of the Cathedral.

Cross-bearer.

Choir.

Clergy.

The Verger with the Mace.

The Dean.

Chaplain.

Bishop of St. John's, Kaffraria.

Chaplain.

Bishop of Grahamstown.

Chaplain.

Bishop of Bloomfontein.

Chaplain with Pastoral Staff.

Bishop of Maritzburg.

Chaplain with Pastoral Staff.

Bishop of St. Helena.

Chaplain with Crozier.

Bishop of Cape Town, Metropolitan ;

(wearing his scarlet chimere.)

Two Chaplains.

On arriving at the chancel, the choir and the clergy took their places in the stalls, and the seats nearest them: the Bishops of St. John's, Grahamstown, and Bloomfontein, at the sedilia; the Bishops of Maritzburg and St. Helena at the Epistle and Gospel steps; and the Metropolitan at the altar. The Epistle was read by the Bishop of Maritzburg, and the Gospel by the Bishop of St. Helena.

Again, the Bishop of Nova Scotia, (no Episcopal tyro, but consecrated more than twenty-five years ago,) when officiating pontifically, *i.e.* as Bishop, at St. Peter's, Charlottetown, allows a cross to be borne before him when going to and from the vestry, and also, on his way to and from the pulpit.

The cross is carried at Chichester Cathedral, in England; where it has never been disused. The assistant Bishop of

London permits its use in his presence, as I had occasion just now to say ; and in the Protestant Episcopal Church of the United States, it is not unknown as an adjunct to the service ; only recently, Bishop Odenheimer held a confirmation in his diocese at which a processional Cross was carried. So it would seem that all round the circumference of the globe, there are Bishops and Clergy acting (to use our Bishop's words) in a manner "contrary to the spirit and ritual of our Church." Indeed, brethren, I intend no flippancy ; no disrespect. But I do intend, when reckless statements are publicly made, no matter by whom, fearlessly and resolutely to meet them.

IV.—It is objected—*whereas we were a united, prosperous congregation ; the Cross will cause loss of people, and will be a source of debate and strife to the Diocese at large.*

Let us see what this objection means.

I cannot think that we shall lose any of our really attached people. Should we do so, then, I can only say that my teaching and my ministry among you, for now over eighteen years, have gone for very little. The confidence between them and their pastor, can never have been such as ought to subsist between Priest and Parishioner, if a matter like this is to separate us.

I can understand people reasoning to themselves in one of two ways :

1. Says A,—“ I have been coming to this church for a good while now, but I have never felt quite comfortable, or at home here. Misgivings about compulsory confession, transubstantiation, and the like ; candles on the altar ; singing at the Sacrament, these have always made me fancy that all is not quite right here. It is true the Bishop comes now and then to preach, and does not seem to object to things, but I should like to feel sure that my clergy were good, sound Protestants. And now this Cross (which the newspapers are full of)

“—I can’t stand it; I shall go to St. Martin’s. They are all right there.”

My Brethren,—of course I am very sorry to lose any one: but I cannot think we sustain an irreparable loss when people leave us in such a frame of mind as that. The question at once suggests itself—ought they to have ever come? The church, of course, is a free church—but they, certainly, should never have come.

2. Says B.—“I have been coming to this little chapel a long time; I like the service: it has brought me many blessings; it is true that I am laughed at by my friends for coming, and it requires a good deal of moral courage to admit that I come, but I should be dreadfully sorry to have to leave. This Cross, and all the fuss about it, has given me something of a shock, I own; but God forbid, that I should doubt the honesty of my clergy. I have heard them preach these many years; I know them personally. I owe them something in the way of confidence and duty. I had better, then, ask them what it all amounts to. They will surely be able to explain any misgivings I may have; and so I shall be able to stay with them, and strengthen their hands, help to fight their battle, and say my prayers, and worship God, as heretofore, in peace and quietness.”

My dear people, if there is one congregation more than any other, which should know their clergy, and trust them, I might almost say, blindly—all lengths, it is this congregation. My house is literally open at all hours. All can come and go, as they please. You see us just as we are. We mix among you in the freest way. We assume no appearance of austere religion, or of Puritanical Pietism, which might keep you at a distance from us. No, for we feel that we are men of like passions with yourselves; trying, like yourselves, to advance, as God may lead us on, and bless our efforts, along the path of holiness. Trust us now, (as the law of charity demands) think no evil, take no offence at the sign of our Redemption.

As to our proceedings being a source of debate and strife in the Diocese, and Synod, why, when have they not been so? Shall we ever hope to see the day when suspicion will be lulled to rest, and the voice of misrepresentation and calumny put to silence? Assuredly not. Isolated and suspected we must be content to be. If our people went over by shoals to the Methodists, or Plymouth Brethren, nothing would be said. Did we, the clergy, play fast and loose with schismatics; did we administer Holy Communion at night, without need; or to a railful at a time; no objection would be taken: did we mutilate or omit special services, it were a venial matter. But when we are a little too reverent, or have a bright joyous service, or try to teach people the principles of worship, then the Synod must be appealed to: this cannot be endured; a canon must be passed, this sort of thing must be put down, stamped out, done away with, at any cost. Thus do they strain out a gnat, while they swallow a camel.

Far from hurting us, persecution has signally helped us. It advertises us, so to speak. People come to see and to hear what is reported to be so idolatrous, so Popish, so Puseyitical. And what do they find? They find a good hearty service, they find much reverence and devotion, they find the mildest type of Ritual. And what is the consequence? Those who come to scoff, remain to pray. Some of our firmest friends have come first, out of curiosity.

One, now an attached member of this church, was warned at his confirmation, on no account to go to St. John's Church. The stock reasons (you know them, "ad nauseam") were given. Of course, he was seized with an intense desire to go "just once", to see how terrible it all was. That "once" settled him. He is, as I said, one of our most attached churchmen.

And what have outsiders to do at all, with us, so long as we are not infringing church law, or depraving church

Doctrine? It is a gratuitous impertinence in them to interfere with us, in any way whatever, and we need not trouble ourselves with them.

Before our English Cathedral was opened for Divine Service in 1861, there was a great deal of foolish gossip all over the town (you know what Montreal is) about innovations, &c.—of which the opening was to be the signal. I was curate of the Cathedral then, and I well remember all that happened. The opening day came: Bishop Fulford was the Preacher. The Bishop, had a happy knack of saying homely things in a telling way. It so happened that a minister of one of the non-conforming churches, had time to get to the Cathedral before the sermon was over. He said to a friend afterwards—"I had no sooner got a seat, than I heard these extraordinary words, '*as for those who come here to spy out our Christian liberty, all I have to say is, that they had better stay at home, and mind their own business.*' "I thought," said the good minister, "they might be meant for me, so I went." Well! but that is not all, he took the Bishop's advice in another sense, and minded his "own business" to such good purpose, that he is now a highly respected clergyman in English orders, and is, what is called, a "good churchman," besides.

Persecution and rudeness, and insult, in the Synod have never done us any harm; on the contrary, they have advanced our cause, and our principles (yes) and our temporal prosperity. At the Synod before last, I was attacked, most shamelessly, for belonging to a society to which I did not belong (s.s. c.) for signing a petition (that of the 483) which I did not sign. I am none the worse to-day. Rather the better. One of those who attacked me apologised handsomely, and is now friendly towards me.

On a previous occasion (which you remember) the only result was a temporary cloud over one of our staff, and the

spread over the whole Dominion of the very doctrines which it was the object of our persecutors to suppress. So it will be now.

Let us possess our souls in patience. Let us be quiet, and hold our tongues.

And as for you, trust in your church principles : trust in your common sense : trust your clergy.

If you have doubts or misgivings, come to us, and have them explained. If we fail to satisfy you, and cannot make you see things exactly in the same light in which we see them, or from the same point of view from which we regard them, *then* (if it must be) go elsewhere, where you will have all the mere prettiness of our system, without that which alone gives it reality ; but if you go, let us still preserve the law of charity unbroken, and let us still be friends.

One would have thought, dear friends, that the little form of prayer, used when our friend presented the Cross, would have disarmed prejudice, and silenced gainsayers. But it was not so. Even our prayer was made a ground of offence and complaint. I cannot help thinking that the words of the prayer must have been imperfectly heard and were, therefore, mis-understood. Let me repeat it now, and let it serve as the concluding words of my address to you this morning :

" O Lord Jesus Christ, who by the will of the Father, didst save the world by shedding Thy Blood on the Cross of Calvary ; bless (we beseech Thee, as a sign of Thy triumph) this Cross which we consecrate in love and honor of Thy Victorious Name ; and grant that whosoever bears it, or looks upon it, may be ever mindful of Thy saving Passion, and bear about in the body Thy Dying, Who livest and reignest, with the Father and the Holy Ghost, one God, world without end. Amen."

APPENDIX.

Mr. Beresford Hope, in his Book on "Worship in the Church of England," gives a striking account of the commemoration of the foundress of Ely Cathedral. "The commemoration was of no hero or heroine of modern controversy, of no one whose canonization was ratified by the cheers of Exeter Hall or the fiat of self-sufficient journalism, but of an abbess far back in the darkest ages, of a woman who built a convent, and herself crept into it to die there, only thinking of her own and her neighbour's souls. Then twelve hundred years after Ethelreda was laid in her grave, the Bishop and Chapter of a Cathedral of our Reformed Church of England solemnly gather together men and women, clergy and lay folk, rich and poor, learned and simple—to keep alive her memory, and render thanks for all the blessings of which her gift to God was the undoubted source, in a great triumph of prayer, and song, and Choral Communion. At the head of this goodly gathering was the Primate of all England, who was inspired by the circumstances of this grand anniversary to speak his full heart."

"The last day of the anniversary was, in some respects, the most remarkable as a spectacle. It was devoted to the Choral festival of the Diocese. Morning and afternoon the various choirs, to the number of more than six hundred persons, each parish marked by its distinctive banner, walked in long procession; or up the nave, through the close-packed multitude, singing the inspiring 'Onward Christian Soldiers.' The procession was closed by the Chapter, and finally by the Bishop, with his pastoral staff borne by his Chaplain. This ceremonial, in the afternoon, (the closing scene of the Bisssex centenary), appealed with a peculiar pathos to the Congregation as the solemn farewell to his diocese, of Bishop Harold Browne, who had just given his fatherly blessing in the mid Octagon, with the emblem of his pastoral office grasped in his left hand."

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